

MERCK FOR MOTHERS PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANCE. Madam Speaker, I rise to call attention to one of the world's oldest and most preventable health tragedies and to recognize efforts under way to address it. I am speaking of the needless and preventable death of women in pregnancy and childbirth.

Motherhood is, of course, at the heart of much of what we value and cherish in our civilization. Yet even today, in this age of scientific achievement, becoming a mother still carries great risk. During the next 10 years, an estimated 3 million women may die attempting to bring new life into the world. This is approximately 1,000 mothers per day. Yet when a mother dies, we lose so much. Her baby is at greater risk and so are her other children. Families are torn apart, and some are thrust into poverty, or deeper into poverty.

Maternal mortality is a problem in the developing world. It is also a problem, Madam Speaker, in the United States of America. As I understand the figures, mothers dying around the time of childbirth doubled here in this country between 1990 and 2008. Unfortunately, women in the United States have a higher risk of dying from pregnancy-related complications than women in 38 other countries.

Yet in acknowledging this tragedy, I rise to recognize and applaud efforts that bring real hope. In my district in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, the health care company Merck has just announced a new program: Merck for Mothers. Merck has pledged a half billion dollars over the next decade to help alleviate this situation, complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The people of Merck will dedicate their expertise to help make proven solutions more widely available, to develop new technologies, and to improve public awareness to save lives.

Making progress against this complex challenge will not be easy. It is not purely a medical problem, and there are no magic bullets.

I applaud Merck and other organizations and individuals who are dedicating their time, their resources, and their expertise to creating an environment where no woman has to die in order to bring a child into the world.

A BRAVE AFGHANISTAN TRUTH-TELLER COMES FORWARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, it was an ancient Greek playwright who originally said: "Trust is the first casualty of war." More than 2,500 years later, those words still hold painfully and tragically true.

Tomorrow afternoon, I will join several of my colleagues in meeting with

Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis who has embarked on a brave truth-telling campaign about the war in Afghanistan.

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After two combat deployments to Afghanistan, Lieutenant Colonel Davis has written two reports—one classified, one unclassified—in which he tells what he has seen. As part of his assignment with the Rapid Equipping Force, he traveled across Afghanistan several times, spanning some 9,000 miles, and visited with hundreds of troops as well as with Afghan civilians and Afghan security forces.

What he saw were Afghan police who stay in the safe harbor of their checkpoints while allowing the Taliban to roam free. What he saw were Afghan local governments completely unprepared to protect and provide for their people. What he heard were stories of, in his words, "how insurgents controlled virtually every piece of land beyond eyeshot of a U.S. or International Security Assistance Force base."

Madam Speaker, this is not exactly the story we've been getting from top military brass when they report on the status of the Afghanistan war. Lieutenant Colonel Davis' experience is yet one more example of how we're not getting the entire story.

As he puts it:

Senior ranking U.S. military leaders have so distorted the truth when communicating with the U.S. Congress and American people in regards to conditions on the ground in Afghanistan that the truth has become unrecognizable.

He continues:

This deception has damaged America's credibility among both our allies and enemies, severely limiting our ability to reach a political solution to the war in Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, after everything Americans have sacrificed—the lives, limbs, the mental capacities of thousands of our people, the billions of dollars every month, our global reputation, and credibility—the least we are owed is the unvarnished truth. For the price the Nation has paid, we deserve transparency and not the propaganda we're receiving. A good start would be to declassify the National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan as well as to publicly release the classified version of Lieutenant Colonel Davis' story.

Some have suggested that Lieutenant Colonel Davis is a publicity seeker. My only response to that is, I certainly hope so. I want the message out. Goodness knows, the other side of the story, the official party line that the Afghanistan war is a strategic success, has gotten plenty of publicity over the last decade. It's about time that a different version of events got close to equal time.

I hope my colleagues, in particular those who have supported the Afghanistan war year in and year out, will read what Lieutenant Colonel Davis has written, and I hope they will consider

the significant risk he has taken and the patriotism he has shown. I look forward to meeting Lieutenant Colonel Davis today, and I look forward to the Nation finally heeding his words, honoring his courage and vindicating his story by bringing our troops home.

COLONEL SAM JOHNSON, A TRUE HERO AMONG US

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, the date was April 16, 1966. The pilot was SAM JOHNSON, United States Air Force. He was a colonel, and he was doing his second tour of duty in Vietnam. He was flying with the fighter squadron called Satan's Angels. He was a career pilot who had already flown 62 combat missions during the Korean war, flying an F-86 Sabre jet. Colonel JOHNSON also flew with the famed Air Force Thunderbirds.

But on that day, April 16, 1966, Colonel JOHNSON in his F-4 was shot down by ground fire by the North Vietnamese. He was captured, and he was put in a prisoner of war camp. Madam Speaker, he was in that POW camp for 7 years.

Because of the way that he would not give in to the torture and to the interrogation, the enemy moved him to the famous Hanoi Hilton, a place they called "Alcatraz." It was as bad a POW camp that ever existed in history. Alcatraz was where 11 POWs were put because they were the most obstinate men, and they were leaders of other POWs. They were hard-nosed, and they had to be segregated. They called themselves the "Alcatraz gang." They were defiant, and the North Vietnamese called this man right here, Colonel SAM JOHNSON, "Die Hard."

They tortured him, but they got no information from him. During that time, that 7 years he was beaten and tortured, SAM JOHNSON never broke down. He was so obstinate that they finally decided to put him in solitary confinement where he remained for 4 years in a cell that was 3-feet-wide by 9-feet. During that 4 years, all that was in that cell was a light bulb above his head that the enemy kept on for 24 hours a day. During the nighttime, they put SAM JOHNSON in leg irons, and during that 4 years, he never saw or talked to another American.

While in the POW camp, he and other POWs communicated with each other with a code by tapping on the wall, and during that time, he memorized the names of the other 374 POWs in captivity. He kept that memory going so that, when he got away or was released or escaped, he would be able to tell their loved ones who they were and where they were. It was brutal, it was harsh, it was cruel, it was mean.

The enemy laughed and made fun of Colonel SAM, and all he ever said was, Is that the best you can do? For food, he ate weeds and pig fat and rice, and